United Nations A/C.5/72/SR.24

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
19 January 2018

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 14 December 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Tommo Monthe ..... (Cameroon)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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Agenda item 163: Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

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17-22528 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 163: Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (A/72/563 and A/72/636)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the revised budget for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/72/563), said that the revised budget amounted to $948.8 million, which represented a decrease of 8.7 per cent compared with the 2016/17 period. That reduction reflected the planned repatriation of military and police personnel, in accordance with the reconfiguration of UNAMID pursuant to Security Council resolution 2363 (2017).

2. UNAMID would focus on military protection, the clearance of explosive remnants of war and emergency relief in the Jebel Marra area. In other areas of Darfur where there had not been recent fighting, UNAMID would focus on stabilizing the situation, supporting the police and helping the rule of law institutions, while continuing to protect civilians, mediating intercommunal conflict and following up on issues related to security sector reform. Taking into account the amount of $486 million previously assessed on Member States for the period from 1 July to 31 December 2017 by General Assembly resolution 71/310, an additional amount of $462.8 million would have to be assessed for the 2017/18 period.

3. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/636), said that, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2363 (2017), UNAMID would downsize its military, police and civilian personnel over a one-year period in two phases, with the first phase to conclude on 31 December 2017 and the second phase to conclude on 30 June 2018. The Advisory Committee recommended an overall reduction in the proposed budget of UNAMID of $9.8 million.

4. The reductions under civilian staffing pertained mainly to one-time termination indemnity costs. The Advisory Committee noted that there was some uncertainty with respect to the number of civilian personnel projected to be on board at the end of the budget period and therefore recommended a reduction in the resources for one-time termination indemnity costs for international and national staff. In addition, the calculation of one-time termination indemnity costs should be more transparent. The Advisory Committee requested the Secretary-General to provide details thereon to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.

5. Further reductions were recommended by the Advisory Committee under three operational categories: a reduction of 10 per cent under official travel; a reduction of $2 million under facilities and infrastructure; and a reduction of $2 million under communications. He recalled that the Advisory Committee had previously urged UNAMID to strengthen its environmental efforts and to pursue the utilization of alterative renewable energy sources in order to minimize the need for fossil-fuel-powered equipment. Efforts aimed at reducing the overall environmental footprint of UNAMID should be strengthened, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolutions 69/307 and 70/286.

6. **Mr. Burity** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the security situation in Darfur had improved. There had been no reports of confrontation between the Government and rebel groups in recent months and the incidence of intercommunal violence had fallen as a result of the effective measures taken by the Government of the Sudan, which had improved the overall humanitarian situation in the country.

7. Implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, including the disarmament of the civilian population and the militia, would help to address the root causes of the conflict and improve peace and security in Darfur. The allocation of appropriate resources for mandate delivery by UNAMID would be instrumental in assisting law enforcement and justice institutions and ensuring that the Government's arms collection campaign was successful.

8. Given that the reconfiguration of UNAMID was proceeding well and that Darfur had remained stable despite the closure of team sites and the steady drawdown of forces, the Group of African States hoped that the second phase of the drawdown would also be a success and that the Operation's resource requirements would fall. More resources should be allocated to reducing the environmental footprint of UNAMID. In addition, the Secretariat should focus on post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

9. **Mr. Mohammed** (Sudan) said that the Security Council, in its resolution 2363 (2017), had decided to reduce the number of UNAMID personnel in the light of the cessation of hostilities. During the first phase, the number of military personnel would be reduced by 44 per cent and the number of police personnel would be reduced by 30 per cent. The second phase would start

in January 2018. The Security Council had recognized his Government's efforts to stabilize the country and implement the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

10. The humanitarian situation in the Sudan had improved. His Government had launched an arms collection campaign and efforts were being made to help displaced persons. It had also had opened several humanitarian corridors in response to the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan and was hosting large numbers of refugees from that country. Moreover, the Sudanese Government and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had concluded an agreement aimed at finding sustainable solutions to the plight of refugees and enabling thousands of displaced persons to return to their villages.

11. The security and stability of the country had also improved. There had not been any new waves of displacement in 2017, nor had there been further clashes between the armed forces and the Darfur rebel movements, except for an incident in May 2017, when the remnants of some rebel groups had entered the country through Libya and South Sudan. However, those groups had been neutralized and the Sudanese Government had observed a unilateral ceasefire ever since. His Government was committed to working with the United Nations and the African Union to bring about lasting peace and promote sustainable development.

12. In the light of recent developments, the budget of UNAMID should be re-examined. The priority should be ensuring post-conflict reconstruction, providing environmental support for affected communities and reducing the environmental footprint of UNAMID. It was also essential to ensure the return of internally displaced persons and promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, but those goals were not in keeping with the mandate and capabilities of UNAMID. The region must focus on consolidating peace and addressing the root causes of conflict, which was a huge challenge that would require concerted efforts by all parties.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/72/SR.25

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
19 January 2018

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 25th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 15 December 2017, at 11 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Tommo Monthe ..... (Cameroon)
Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Sene

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Agenda item 136: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (*continued*)

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17-22629 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Agenda item 136: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (*continued*) (A/72/7/Add.10 and A/72/371)

1. **Mr. Huisman** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/72/371), said that the total estimated resource requirements for the 35 special political missions covered by the report amounted to $641.1 million, including the share of special political missions in the budget of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/293. As the mandate of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism had not been renewed, the requirements of the remaining 34 special political missions amounted to $636.3 million. The proposed number of civilian positions for the 34 missions was 3,838, an increase of 109 positions, mainly as a result of the establishment of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, although that was partly offset by net decreases in staffing under the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

2. The budget proposals for special political missions for 2018 were organized in three thematic clusters, while the budgets for UNAMA and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq were presented in separate addenda. The missions grouped under cluster I were special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General; cluster II missions were sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, and other entities and mechanisms; and cluster III missions were regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions. For 2018, the budget proposals for the Panel of Experts on Mali, the United Nation Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya were also presented in separate addenda.

3. Efforts continued to be made to improve the format and presentation of budgets for special political missions. The report included information on official travel resources, backstopping positions and vacancy rates. It was proposed that the General Assembly should approve the budgets for the 34 special political missions for 2018, including the share of special political missions in the budget of the Regional Service Centre, in the total amount of $636.3 million. The Assembly was also requested to approve a charge of $636.3 million against the provision for special political missions proposed under section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019.

4. **Mr. Sene** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/7/Add.10), which covered the Secretary-General's overall resource estimates for special political missions and related cross-cutting issues. He said that the Secretary-General had presented the resource requirements for each of the special political missions in addenda to his main report (A/72/371/Add.1, A/72/371/Add.2, A/72/371/Add.3, A/72/371/Add.4, A/72/371/Add.5, A/72/371/Add.6, A/72/371/Add.7 and A/72/371/Add.8) and the Advisory Committee had accordingly made specific recommendations on those resources in its related reports (A/72/7/Add.11, A/72/7/Add.12, A/72/7/Add.13, A/72/7/Add.14, A/72/7/Add.15, A/72/7/Add.16, A/72/7/Add.17 and A/72/7/Add.18). In view of the conclusion of the mandate of one mission under thematic cluster II, the proposed resources for 2018 included requirements for 34, rather than 35, missions. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the resources requested by the Secretary-General, subject to its comments and recommendations as set out in its related reports.

5. The Advisory Committee also made recommendations on cross-cutting issues for the special political missions. With regard to the budget performance for 2016–2017, the Advisory Committee noted that the expenditures for 2016–2017 were projections made during the preparation of the budget. The projections would only be updated in the Secretary-General's second performance report. Accordingly, the Committee requested that the most up-to-date information should be provided to the General Assembly now. Regarding resource requirements for 2018–2019, an amount of $636.3 million was proposed for 34 missions for 2018, which would be charged against the proposed biennial provision of $1,109.6 million for 2018–2019, leaving an amount of $473.3 million for 2019 for special political missions. The level of resources approved for special political missions for recent bienniums had been between 7 and 10 per cent higher than the amount set aside for the missions in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019.

6. Turning to the staffing requirements for 2018, he said that the Secretary-General was proposing a net increase of 109 positions for the 34 missions. That increase reflected the proposed establishment of 415 positions and a reduction of 306 positions. The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the proposed staffing requirements for individual missions were contained in its related reports. With regard to operational costs, there was a proposed increase of $34.7 million for 2018 compared with the resources approved for 2017 for the 34 missions.

7. A total of $20.3 million was proposed under official travel for 2018, an increase of $2.4 million, or 13.6 per cent, from 2017. The Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of 5 per cent ($1,013,655) in the resources proposed under official travel for 2018, based on its analysis of the costing parameters for air tickets, compliance with the advance purchase policy, and utilization of videoconferencing and alternative means of communication.

8. Actual air fares for some destinations in 2016–2017 had been considerably lower than the estimates in the budget proposals for 2018; accordingly, the Advisory Committee considered that the resource estimates for official travel for 2018 contained some overestimation. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to improve the methodology for determining air ticket estimates in all budget proposals. Improving compliance with the advance purchase policy would also lead to savings. In addition, little information was made available concerning actual or potential savings arising from the use of alternative means of communication; given the ever-expanding and improved means of communication offered by technology, larger reductions in resource requirements for official travel could have been possible.

9. The trend of increasingly higher-than-standard allocations of vehicles, computing devices and spare computing equipment should be reviewed and reversed. The Advisory Committee welcomed the greater scrutiny and control to be exercised over the acquisition of vehicles planned for 2018 and the related redistribution of available vehicle stock across the missions.

10. The Advisory Committee noted that no independent validation of the costs and benefits of the Kuwait Joint Support Office was planned in the review of the shared service centres in the context of the preparation of the report on the global service delivery model. The set-up of the Support Office did not include a business case study, with independently validated cost-benefit analysis, for approval by the Assembly. The Advisory Committee had also discussed other cross-cutting issues in its report, such as backstopping support to special political missions at Headquarters, the lack of progress in the nationalization of positions, and mission support structure.

11. **Mr. Gafoor** (Singapore), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN fully supported the important role played by special political missions in responding to complex global security challenges, and was committed to increasing their effectiveness, transparency and accountability. Special political missions must be able to deliver on their mandates. Coordination among special political missions, peacekeeping operations and other peacebuilding activities must be improved to avoid duplication and enable the United Nations to work as one.

12. Current financing arrangements made it difficult for special political missions to operate at optimum capacity. The Fifth Committee had repeatedly failed to take action on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations regarding funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions. Those recommendations were increasingly pertinent. If Member States were serious about giving the Secretary-General the tools to respond effectively and flexibly to special situations, they must follow through by facilitating his work.

13. A serious review of funding and backstopping arrangements must be undertaken. The efficiency gains promised by the Secretariat to bring down costs had not been achieved. The regular budget was shrinking in real terms, but the share of special political missions in the budget had increased exponentially. The Secretariat had proposed a budget of $5.4 billion for 2018–2019, a 3.9 per cent decrease from the appropriation for the current biennium, and further reductions were likely. Special political missions accounted for over 20 per cent of the regular budget, cannibalizing funding for other priority items such as development.

14. The Advisory Committee's recommendations concerning funding and backstopping arrangements should be implemented immediately. Special political missions should be funded from a separate account that was aligned with the budgetary cycle for peacekeeping operations and charged on the peacekeeping scale. It was important to ensure adequate and predictable financing for special political missions, including during mission drawdown, to guarantee the stability and continuity of peacebuilding activities.

15. ASEAN noted that 34 out of the 35 special political missions had been created by decisions of the Security Council and they included large field missions that had more in common with peacekeeping operations than traditional special political missions. The current scale of assessments for peacekeeping operations reflected the responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council; it was not unreasonable to expect States that had immense influence over special political missions to shoulder a larger responsibility for their funding.

16. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea** (Mexico) said that special political missions played an important role in building peace on the ground. They also played an important preventive role by promoting mediation and sustainable development and strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights. They enabled the international community to respond effectively to various challenges and contexts.

17. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the Organization, in particular the peace and security pillar. As part of that process, the way in which decisions about special political missions were made must be reviewed. At present the Security Council, with its restricted membership, decided how the resources of all Member States were spent. Mandates approved by the Security Council entailed resources that exceeded 20 per cent of the regular budget, which was unsustainable. A large portion of those resources went to just three missions.

18. Resources for special political missions should be channelled into prevention, development, peacebuilding, creating inclusive societies, promoting the rule of law and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. If such missions focused on building lasting peace and became more transparent and accountable, they would be viewed more favourably. His delegation hoped that a separate account for special political missions would be created as part of the current reform process. Recalling that special political missions operated in volatile areas, he said that the Organization must be able to respond quickly and efficiently to requests for assistance in order to remain relevant. Changing the way in which special political missions were financed and improving transparency would help to ensure that the Secretary-General's reform efforts were a success.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.